(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) what benefits are expected to Government and consumers therefrom; and

(d) by when a final decision would be taken in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) and (b) An internal study has been undertaken, which is in its preliminary stages, on the options available to strengthen both BSNL and MTNL and to ensure that these companies are well placed to deal with the emerging competition from private sector as well as to maximize the value for all stake holders.

(c) and (d) The proposals are still under examination.

Teledensity in the Country

917. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to the survey conducted by the ICICI Securities, teledensity in the country would be doubled by 2007;

(b) if so, what is the present teledensity and the number of connections in the country; and

(c) what is the commensurate revenue that would be generated with the above increase?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRIMATI SUMITRA MAHAJAN): (a) Government is not aware of the survey conducted by the ICICI securities. However, it is expected that the teledensity will be doubled by 2007 based on the present growth rate of telephone connection.

(b) The present teledensity and the number of telephone connections in the country is 4.63 per hundred and 484.20 lakhs respectively as on 31.10.2002.

(c) There is no set pattern for growth in revenue with respect to increase in the telephone connection. However, it has observed that the revenue per DEL (Direct Exchange Line) falls with the increase in the number of telephones in the network but the gross revenue from the network increase with increase in the number of telephone connections.

Slowdown in Software Exports

918. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a slow down in the growth of software exports resulting in excess supply of fresh infotech engineers in the country; and

(b) if so, the details of the yearly supply of fresh infotech engineers from Government recognised colleges and the expected absorption of these engineers in the domestic industry as well as abroad?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (DR. SANJAY PASWAN): (a) No, Sir. During the year 2001-02 export of software was estimated at Rs. 36,500/- crore registering a growth of 29% over the year 2000-01 when the export was recorded to be Rs. 28350 crore. During the first half of 2002-03, a growth of 24.24% is estimated over the corresponding period last year.

(b) The supply of Infotech Engineers during 2000-2001 was around 12500 at Degree level and 7600 at Diploma level. The absorption of these Engineers have been estimated to be 78% of Degree holders and 53% of Diploma holders within two years of obtaining their Degree/Diploma out of which around 5% are employed abroad.

Collection of Money under USF

919. SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:
SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) the money collected during the years 1999-2000, 2000-01 and 2001-02 on the basis of the Universal Service Fund (USF); and